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Titus 3:5 & the Washing of Regeneration

Israel's Sojourn in Egypt? Part 2

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WHY
DOESN'T
God
Just...?



Titus 3:5 and The WASHING OF REGENERATION

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

FOR most of the 2,000 years of the Christian Era, the “washing of regeneration” has been readily acknowledged as an allusion to water baptism. What’s more, the vast majority of Christendom did not place baptism in conflict with salvation like many today who insist that if baptism precedes and is necessary to salvation, then baptism would be a “work”—and “everyone knows we’re not saved by works.”¹ Such thinking, only relatively recently popularized, is so foreign to New Testament teaching on salvation that it is difficult to fathom how it could have attained such a prominent foothold in contemporary Christian theology. Incredibly,

no doubt due to the Holy Spirit’s eternal and timeless nature as deity, this passage anticipated the “wrong turn” that has been taken by correcting the components that compose the “no works so no baptism” dogma.

The Central Features of Salvation

Observe carefully how Titus 3:3-8 pinpoints four central features of redemption. First, we humans have been thoroughly and completely lost in sin due to our own actions (i.e., “foolish, disobedient, etc.”—vs. 3). Second, it took a kind and loving God to manifest Himself as our Savior (vs. 4). This divine initiative that was intended to save

us was a clear manifestation of His mercy (vs. 5), and grace (vs. 7), and it was accomplished via Jesus Christ (vs. 6). Third, our salvation could not be achieved by human goodness or our own “works of righteousness,” i.e., works or actions that we enact in order to atone for our sin, save ourselves, and bring about our own justification/righteousness (vs. 5).² Fourth, on the contrary, God made our salvation possible via “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (vs. 5). A careful examination of each of these factors, together with awareness of the underlying language selected by the Holy Spirit, will clarify succinctly the role and function played by water baptism in the divine scheme of redemption. Consider the chart below.

To summarize, according to this context, **Who** saved us? It was “God our Savior,” “the Holy Spirit,” and “Jesus Christ our Savior.” **What** did they make available to us? We could be “saved,” “justified,” and have “the hope of eternal life.” **Where** was this salvation made possible? In and through Jesus Christ our Savior—a reference to His unique role in the

TITUS 3:3-8

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.

PRE-CHRISTIAN CONDITION	GOD'S ATTITUDE	HUMAN RESPONSE	RESULTING CONDITION	RESULTING BEHAVIOR
Foolish Disobedient Deceived	Kindness	Washing of Regeneration	Saved	Maintain Good Works
Serving Lusts & Pleasures	Love	Believe in God	Justified by His Grace	
Living in Malice & Envy Hateful	Mercy		Hope of Eternal Life	

scheme of redemption by His death on the cross. **Why** would they desire to save us? It was due to their “kindness,” “love,” “mercy,” and “grace.” **When** was the moment in time that God bestowed these blessings and saved us? It was at the moment of “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

“Washing of Regeneration” and “Renewal of the Holy Spirit”?

So the question is—to what do these two expressions refer? Baptist grammarian Robertson conceded that the “washing of regeneration” refers to water baptism.³ The vast majority of commentators, theologians, and grammarians through the centuries have agreed. Look carefully at the syntax selected by the Holy Spirit. In verse 5, *dia* with the genitive is used, meaning “through.” Why would “regeneration,” i.e., being cleansed of sin in order to be saved, be coupled with the term “washing”? λουτρόν (*loutron*) refers to a bath, washing, or ablution and is used only twice in the New Testament—here and in Ephesians 5:26 where spiritual cleansing is also in view. The verb form λούω (*louo*) is used five times in the New Testament,⁴ with its use in Hebrews 10:22 paralleling Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 5:26. A related word, ἀπολούω (*apolouo*), used only twice in the New Testament, refers in both instances to cleansing of sin at the point of conversion (1 Corinthians 6:11; Acts 22:16).⁵

The Bible is its own best interpreter. Since the Holy Spirit is the Author of the entire Bible, He would naturally repeat and paraphrase Himself. A careful comparison of the Titus and Ephesians verses, along with John 3:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13, enables the reader to clarify the precise meaning of the phrase “the washing of regeneration.” The following chart illustrates this comparison:

THE MEANING OF TITUS 3:5			
JOHN 3:5	SPIRIT	WATER	KINGDOM
1 COR. 12:13	SPIRIT	BAPTIZED	BODY
EPH. 5:26	WORD	WASHING OF WATER	CHURCH
TITUS 3:5	HOLY SPIRIT	WASHING OF REGEN.	SAVED
	 The Holy Spirit authored the Gospel; He “begets” and “renews” us by this preached Word.	 The Gospel generates penitent faith that leads to immersion in water.	 We are now saved, citizens of the kingdom, and members of Christ’s body the church.

The “washing of regeneration” of Titus corresponds with “washing of water” in Ephesians, “baptized” in 1 Corinthians, and “water” in John 3.

Observe further that the term παλιγγενεσίας (*paliggenesias*—“regeneration”) is a compound word composed of the two Greek words πάλιν (*palin*—“again”) and γένεσις (*genesis*—“birth”).⁶ One cannot help but recall the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus pertaining to a second birth—which entailed “water” (John 3:3-7). Further, in both cases, the Holy Spirit acted as the divine agent by which the plan of salvation was communicated. He conveys the message of salvation and terms of entrance into the kingdom via human spokesmen (“earthen vessels”—2 Corinthians 4:7). Hence, “renewal of the Holy Spirit” is achieved when an individual conforms to the specifications given by the Spirit in the Gospel, i.e., he hears the message and believes it (Romans 10:17), repents of his sins (Acts 3:19), confesses Christ with his mouth (Romans 10:9-10), and is immersed in water for the remis-

sion of sins (Acts 2:38). A person is “renewed” by the Spirit **when he obeys the instructions of the Spirit** to undergo the “washing of regeneration,” i.e., baptism.

One final observation regarding this verse. Follow the logic: If we are **not** saved by “works of righteousness which we have done,” but we **are** saved by the “washing of regeneration,” then it follows that the “washing of regeneration” cannot be classified as a “work of righteousness.” Hence, baptism is not a “work” or “deed” in the same sense that Paul uses those terms in passages like Romans 3:28 (“justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”) and Ephesians 2:9 (“not of works, lest anyone should boast”). Commenting on these two verses, McGarvey insightfully noted:

But by works of law in this place Paul means such acts of obedience to law as would justify a man on the ground of innocence, and make him independent of the grace manifested in pardon.... Now baptism is certainly an act of faith, deriving its propriety from a positive

command; and **not a work of law** in the sense attached to that expression by Paul; consequently, it may be required of a believer to be baptized **before** he is forgiven, and yet justification may be apart from “works of law”.... [T]he works excluded from the ground of salvation are works of perfect obedience, by which, if any man had wrought them, he would be saved on the ground of merit. This would exclude grace. But remission of sins is in its very nature a grace bestowed, and not a debt paid; and whether it is bestowed on certain conditions or on no condition, it **remains a matter of grace**. Only in case the works done are of such a nature that the person doing them deserves salvation, can grace be excluded; and in that case there would be no remission, because there would be no sins to be remitted. So, then, if God has seen fit to require the believer to be baptized before he forgives him, forgiveness is none the less a matter of grace than if he made no such requirement.⁷

Baptism is necessary to and precedes salvation. It is not to be considered a “work of righteousness” that is excluded from God’s bestowal of salvation.

ENDNOTES

¹ For a discussion of this verse, see Eric Lyons (2020), “Ephesians 2:8-9: Contradictory, or Perfectly Consistent?” *Reason & Revelation*, 40[10]:110-113, 116-119.

² It is a misinterpretation of Scripture to assume that, since humans do not have it within their capability to achieve their own salvation, then no action on their part is required by God. The Bible repeatedly indicates that humans are required to perform “righteous acts,” i.e., actions that God, Himself, stipulates as prerequisite to His bestowal of blessing. When Peter sought to convince the Gentiles that they, too, were acceptable recipients of salvation and entrance into the kingdom, he contrasted their **ethnicity**, which was irrelevant to their salvation, with their **obedience**, which was relevant and essential. He styled this indispensable prerequisite

to salvation: “whoever fears Him and **works righteousness** is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35). Obviously, Peter did not believe that anyone can merit or earn their salvation. Nevertheless, he indicated that certain “acts of righteousness” performed by humans are necessary to salvation. This is no doubt the sense intended by him on the day of Pentecost when he declared: “**Save yourselves** from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40, ASV, ESV, NRSV, NIV, et al.). Observe, however, that these righteous acts are stipulated **by God**—not man. For a man to do what God tells him to do in no way implies that the individual is somehow achieving his own salvation or that he is being saved by “works” rather than by “grace.” Cf. 1 John 3:7, 10. The righteous acts that God requires humans to do before He will impart His gracious, undeserved forgiveness based on the blood of Christ are faith, repentance, oral confession of Jesus’ deity, and baptism. See John 6:29 where Jesus stated that believing is a “work” that God requires man to perform (cf. Galatians 5:6; Philippians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:22). See Danker—“the deeds that God desires” [Frederick Danker (2000), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 390] and Thayer—“the works required and approved by God” [Joseph Thayer (1977 reprint), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 248]. Likewise, repentance entails “works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20). See also the expression “obedience of faith” in Romans 1:5 and 16:26 which refers to the **obedient compliance** that characterizes and defines the kind of faith set forth in the book. If faith, repentance, and oral confession with the mouth (Romans 10:9-10) all constitute physical and mental actions/works that an individual must perform **before** he can be saved, why would anyone balk at baptism as a prerequisite to salvation—a passive act that is done **to** the person by

the baptizer? The reason man cannot save himself by his own actions is due to his having sinned. One sin necessitates that salvation be achieved on some basis other than man’s own goodness/conduct. All his good works and obedience cannot nullify the one sin he committed. Hence, God must “step in” and orchestrate the means of forgiveness, which He did in the sending of His Son. That act is the grace of the Bible. God must then, likewise, communicate to man precisely how he may take advantage of that forgiveness, i.e., what man must do in order for God to apply the cleansing benefits of Christ’s blood to man’s sin. Faith, repentance, oral confession, and immersion in water constitute the prerequisites that **God** stipulates as necessary in order for Him to forgive sin as His free gift and gracious mercy.

³ A.T. Robertson (1931), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), 4:607.

⁴ It refers to washing feet in John 13:10, washing a dead body in Acts 9:37, washing backs that had been beaten in Acts 16:33, and the washing of a pig in 2 Peter 2:22. Its occurrence in Revelation 1:5 in the Textus Receptus is a textual variant.

⁵ These word counts are taken from W.F. Moulton and A.S. Geden (1978), *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), pp. 97, 606.

⁶ Wesley Penschbacher, ed. (1990), *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 303; Thayer, p. 474. Thayer even uses the words “new birth” to define the term, along with “renewal, re-creation” and adds “the production of a new life consecrated to God, a radical change of mind for the better, (**effected in baptism**)” and cites Titus 3:5. Danker, also, cites Titus 3:5 as an instance where the term means “experience of a complete change of life, *rebirth*” (p. 752, italics in orig.).

⁷ J.W. McGarvey (1892), *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard), pp. 247-248, emp. added.

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Editor & Associate Editor:

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Jeff Miller, M.S., Ph.D.*

(*Biomechanical Engineering, Auburn University)

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WHEN and WHERE

Was Israel's Sojourn in Egypt?

The Long and Short of It

PART 2

Jonathan Moore, DPM, Ph.D.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Part I of this two-part series appeared in the February issue of *R&R*. Part II follows below and continues, without introductory comments, where the first article ended.]

UNDERSTANDING THE TIME SPANS

CONSIDERING the above passages, do the 400 and 430-year periods correlate or contradict? Although both periods end with the Exodus, one must consider their beginnings to understand these time spans fully. As Paul indicates in Galatians 3:16-18, the 430-year period began with the Lord's promise to Abraham. Genesis 15:13-16 conveys that the 400-year period began with the affliction upon Abraham's descendants, namely, Isaac's first affliction.

Although Abraham received several divine calls as recorded in Genesis, pinpointing the precise timing of the initial promise is challenging. Genesis 12:1-4 states that when Abraham was called out of Haran to Canaan, he was 75 years old—but it is unclear if the initial promise was made the same year or some time before. Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5) when Isaac was born. If the divine promise was imparted to Abraham 30 years before Isaac's birth, this elucidates the periods of 400 and 430 years. Alternatively, if the promise was given when Abraham was 75 years old and if Isaac was five years old when he was weaned and began to be mocked by Ishmael (Genesis 21:9), then there is

no discrepancy. (Add 25 years from the promise to Isaac's birth and five more until Isaac's first affliction to account for the 30 years.¹)

Thus, upon the writing of Genesis 15, the 400 years of affliction would have started with the weaning of Abraham's first descendant, Isaac (430 years minus 30 years), not upon the initial promise made to Abraham when he was 75. So, both the 430 years and the 400 years are correct but have different starting points. The time between the promise to Abraham (at 75) and the Exodus leads to 430 years, and the time span between the weaning and affliction of Isaac (Genesis 21:9) and the Exodus results in 400 years.

FOURTH GENERATION

GENESIS 15:16 also records that the Lord told Abraham that "in the fourth generation they shall return here" to Canaan. Numbers 14:33-34 records that the older generation would be left to die in the wilderness due to their disobedience to God. The question is whether this fourth-generation reference best fits within a 430-year span or 215 years. Again, this issue continues to be hotly debated, but for our purposes, we will be succinct.

This passage is part of God's covenant with Abraham, where God is telling Abraham about the future of his descendants. It is generally understood that the "fourth generation" mentioned here refers to the actual descendants of Abraham,

not the number of generations (i.e., time) that passed after they entered Egypt. In other words, God is telling Abraham that his descendants will return to the land promised to him after four generations of living in a foreign land, which is later revealed to be Egypt.

Though "in the fourth generation" sounds ambiguous or even theologically symbolic, it would be impossible to count these four generations from Abraham as this only gets you to around the time Jacob and his family entered Egypt. From Jacob, however, it is only four generations to Moses (though he did not enter Canaan) and only four generations from the sons and/or grandsons of Jacob who went down into Egypt and then returned to Canaan. Yet, this would preclude missing generations and only works in the short sojourn model.

Based on the scope of this analysis, it is important to acknowledge that while the initial generation designated to return to Canaan was the fourth, the fifth generation—descendants of the fourth—were also present upon arrival in Canaan. The primary constraint from the given text is that the fourth generation was the earliest generation to make the return to Canaan. Nevertheless, their progeny, who lived during the same period, were going to be arriving at the same time.

One striking example of how these chronologies demonstrate real problems for those who support the long sojourn position is the generation of Levi. Detailed information regarding their ages at death and birthplaces allows us to construct a chronological timeline. According to the biblical account, Levi was born in Haran well before the Israelites' arrival in Egypt, as documented in Genesis 29. Notably, Levi's grandson Amram married Levi's daughter, Jochebed (Amram's aunt), as stated in Exodus 6:20, thus

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making Levi both the grandfather and great-grandfather of Moses and his siblings. Following the pattern set forth above, the fourth generation of Levi's descendants that came into Canaan includes Moses' sons Gershom and Eliezer (1 Chronicles 23:14-17). Moving backward, Moses, their father, died at 120; Moses' father, Amram, died at around 137; and Kohath, the son of Levi, died at around 133.

Kohath, son of Levi, to Gershom and Eliezer (four generations)

- 1st Kohath (death at age 133)
- 2nd Amram (death at age 137)
- 3rd Moses (80 years old at Exodus; death at 120)
- 4th Gershom and Eliezer (generation that entered Canaan)

Even if one stretches the available data to its maximum limits, this timeline does not work in the context of a 430-year-long Egyptian sojourn. The provided genealogy suggests that even if Levi arrived in Goshen at the age of 50 with his newborn son Kohath (as mentioned in Genesis 46:11), and if Kohath had his son Amram at the old age of 133—the year he died—Amram's lifespan of 137 years would still not bridge the gap to 400 or 430 years since Moses was 80 at the time of the Exodus. The most you can get out of Moses' genealogy is 350 years (133 plus 137 plus 80), leaving an unaccounted 70 to 80-year gap.

The dilemma of the generational timeline deepens upon closer scrutiny. First, it is exceedingly unlikely that these men had children the year of their death. So, since they likely sired their children younger in life, the overall available time span would decrease further. Additionally, taking into account that Jochebed would have eventually reached menopause, her lifespan would not be enough to cover the gap to her own children, especially

if it mirrored that of her contemporaries. If one adheres to the view that the Israelites endured 400 years of Egyptian oppression, this period could not commence before Joseph's death. This leads to the implication that the 400-year countdown began with the onset of oppression during Moses' generation and ended with the Exodus. However, this poses a chronological challenge because Moses only lived to be 120 years old, making it unfeasible for him to span the entire 430 years.

It is, therefore, impossible for a 430-year sojourn to fit within the four generations unless one claims gaps in the genealogy, which is what long sojourn advocates must do out of necessity.² Robert Carter and Lita Sanders correctly state, "[T]he biblical genealogy would be incredibly opaque if the people recording the data were skipping over random people. It would not even be easy to do if they were skipping over only specific people, because so many siblings, uncles, nieces, etc., are mentioned."³ On the other hand, when we consider a shorter sojourn period of 215 years, the available data aligns much better without the need for interjecting missing names or families. In this scenario, it is plausible that Miriam, who nearly lived through the 40-year Exodus, could have had early memories of Kohath, who was born prior to the Israelites' arrival in Egypt. A shorter sojourn is simply better substantiated by the available data.

DATING THE SOJOURN

The Pharaoh of Joseph's Time: Sesostri III or the Hyksos?

FOR those that support a long sojourn along with an early-date Exodus, ca. 1446/1445 B.C., the full 430 years is added, resulting in ca. 1876/1875 B.C. as the year Jacob would have entered

Egypt in the United Middle Kingdom during the reign of Sesostri III.⁴ However, as noted previously, if the 400-year affliction of Genesis 15 started 71 years after Jacob arrived in Egypt, when Joseph died and the people were enslaved, that would lead to an Exodus at the end of this period occurring ca. 1406 B.C. (1876/1875 B.C. + 70 years = 1805 B.C. + 400 years of affliction = 1406 B.C.). However, an Exodus date of 1406 B.C. is not consistent with the biblical text.

According to supporters of the short sojourn along with an early-date Exodus, Jacob entered Egypt in 1660 B.C. (1446/1445 B.C. + 215 years). If Jacob entered Egypt ca. 1660 B.C., he would have arrived during the Egyptian 2nd Intermediate period when the Hyksos ruled a divided Egypt (ca. 1650-1550 B.C.). The Hyksos people were a Semitic people, like the Israelites, not native Egyptians, which may explain the willingness of the pharaoh of Joseph's time to place him in a position of power.

Additionally, the narrative of Joseph rising to power is well articulated within the biblical text. Kenneth Kitchen,⁵ who maintains a mild degree of ambiguity on this particular issue, seems to support the notion of Joseph's ascension during the Hyksos era ca. 1650 B.C. He further remarks on the introduction of chariots during the Hyksos reign, which seems to affirm that the Hyksos period, rather than the Middle Kingdom era, is a more suitable context for the events of Genesis 41:42-43:

Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him *ride in a chariot as his second-in-command*, and people shouted before him, "Make way!"

Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Kitchen acknowledges that the type of war chariot referred to in Genesis 41 did not exist before the Hyksos period.

The Pharaoh Who Knew Not Joseph: Ahmose I or the Hyksos?

Due to the prosperity of the Israelites in Egypt during Joseph's time, the affliction referenced in Genesis 15 must have started after the rise of a pharaoh who did not know Joseph. After Joseph's death, we have recorded:

And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves (Exodus 1:12b-14, ESV).

Following the short sojourn dating, Jacob's death 17 years after his arrival in ca. 1660 B.C., as well as the death of his son Joseph years after that, would place the enslaving of the Israelites after ca. 1590 B.C., only 64 years before the birth of Moses. The maximum period of hard bondage was less than 130 years. (Joseph's death year minus the year of the Exodus, ca. 1573 B.C. - 1446 B.C. = 127 years.) The minimum length of hard bondage was 80 years, from Moses' birth to the Exodus, at which time he was 80 years old (Exodus 2:1-12; cf. 7:7).

The best evidence points to Ahmose I (ca. 1550-1525 B.C.) as the pharaoh who knew not Joseph (Exodus 1:8). During the beginning of his reign, ca. 1550-1540, the Hyksos rulers were defeated and expelled from Egypt. However, those of Jacob's lineage who lived in and around Goshen did not leave. Instead, they stayed in their rich surroundings, ultimately finding

themselves enslaved and hated by their native Egyptian conquerors, who likely perceived the Hebrews as being aligned with their enemies, the Hyksos.

In Exodus 1:8, the "new king" "arose...over Egypt." In Hebrew the verb *qum* plus the preposition *'al* often has the meaning "to rise against" (e.g., Deuteronomy 19:11; 28:7; Judges 9:18; 20:5; 2 Samuel 18:31; 2 Kings 16:7)—inferring a violent military overthrow. This interpretation fits well with Ahmose I who defeated the Hyksos militarily. However, it could not be said of the Hyksos who assumed rule over a long period of time without an invasion or violence.⁶

The statement found in Exodus 1:10 becomes more comprehensible within this framework: "come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land." Which adversaries could the Egyptians have been wary of as they observed the burgeoning numbers of the Hebrews? The context provided by this verse is particularly cogent if the foes in question were a group that had been recently expelled from Egypt after a century of dominion: the Hyksos. This pharaoh's concern was not only that the Hebrews had become too numerous but that with their numbers, along with their prior rulers, the Hyksos could retake control of lower Egypt.

Some have questioned how Ahmose I (the native Egyptian King who began the 18th Egyptian Dynasty), if he were the "new King who knew not Joseph" according to Exodus 1:8, could truthfully say that the Israelites were more and mightier than the Egyptians. In answering this question, it is essential to understand that verse 7 of Exodus 1 indicates that the Israel-

ites were exceedingly fruitful, and they multiplied greatly, such that the land was filled with them. The Israelite people who remained after the Hyksos were removed would have certainly outnumbered by far the native Egyptians.

Some advocates of the long sojourn believe that with Jacob/Joseph having arrived well before the Hyksos (ca. 1875 B.C.), the "new king who did not know Joseph" was indeed the inaugural Hyksos ruler.⁷ This view posits that a Semitic Hyksos king enslaved and persecuted a kindred Semitic group who had been granted land in the same region where the Hyksos earlier established their capital Avaris. This line of reasoning stretches the bounds of credulity. Additionally, proponents of the long sojourn theory face the challenge of identifying a plausible enemy that could have allied with Israel to mount an offensive against Egypt.

CONCLUSION

THE duration of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt is a topic of intense debate among scholars due to varying approaches to Egyptian chronology and the biblical text. Despite this, a consensus tending toward the short sojourn perspective is quite evident reaching back from the earliest Jewish chronologists (Hillel) to John Calvin, Ussher, Newton, and Hoffmeier, along with a host of other scholars. Though there is a considerable amount of data that was not discussed in this article, numerous aspects of the biblical texts and Egyptian history corroborate the short sojourn hypothesis:

1. Adhering to the long sojourn interpretation complicates our understanding of passages like Galatians 3:17, which unequivocally declares that the interval from the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the Law at Sinai was 430 years.

2. The concept of a short sojourn aligns with the scriptural records, especially when considering various ancient texts (LXX) that refer to the sojourn encompassing both Egypt and Canaan.
3. Many places in Scripture (Exodus 12:40; Genesis 17:8; 28:4; and Exodus 6:4) indicate that Canaan was considered part of the sojourning of Abraham and his descendants—not Egypt alone.
4. The 430-year timeframe does not conflict with the 400-year affliction. Rather, the 430 years encompasses the period from Abraham's covenant in Genesis 12 to the giving of the Law after the Exodus. Within this timeframe, there is a 400-year period where Abraham's descendants, starting with Isaac's oppression by Ishmael, experienced adversity, leading up to the final afflictions in Egypt preceding the Exodus.
5. The genealogies among those who entered Egypt and were involved in the Exodus better support the 215-year sojourn, and in some ways function against its being 430 years.⁸
6. Under the premise of the short sojourn, Joseph would have risen to power under the Hyksos (15th Dynasty, ca. 1650-1550 B.C.) and not during the time of native Egyptian pharaohs (long sojourn). Numerous synchronizations exist that better explain the Joseph narrative including that he is depicted using a chariot (Genesis 41:43; 46:29). This aligns with the historical understanding that chariots did not exist in Egypt prior to the Hyksos, consistent with the short sojourn.
7. Ahmose I's military defeat of the Hyksos fits well with the Hebrew language describing the pharaoh who did not know Joseph in Exodus 1:8, implying a military conquest. This description does not fit with long sojourn advocates' suggestion that the new king was a Hyksos pharaoh.

When the biblical narrative is interpreted holistically and ratio-

nally, the perceived discrepancies typically associated with the sojourn's duration are resolved. While one should remain non-dogmatic on every detail regarding the genealogies and Egyptian chronology (which seems to change daily), evidence for the short sojourn is extremely well-supported and makes much more sense textually and historically, especially when it comes to the narrative of Joseph.⁹

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See Martin Anstey (1913), *The Romance of Bible Chronology* (London: Marshall Brothers), pp. 114, 117.
- ² See Paul J. Ray (2012), "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn In Egypt," *Associates for Biblical Research*, January 5; Karl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch (1952) "The Pentateuch 1," in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. by James Martin (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans), p. 469.
- ³ Robert Carter and Lita Sanders (2021), "How Long were the Israelites in Egypt? Using their own Family Tree to Resolve a Debate," *Creation*, <https://creation.com/how-long-were-the-israelites-in-egypt>.
- ⁴ Thiele argues that by adding the 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 to the date of the Exodus (1446 B.C.), we arrive around 1875 B.C. See Edwin R. Thiele (1965), *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 52. This period, specifically 1878-1843 B.C., corresponds to the reign of Sesostri III, who is thought to be contemporary with Abraham (Genesis 12). Whitcomb, Payne, and Wood hold that it was Jacob, referenced

in Genesis 47, who arrived during the reign of Sesostri III, not Abraham. See J. Barton Payne (1954), *An Outline of Hebrew History* (Grand Rapids: Baker), p. 47; John C. Whitcomb, Jr. (1968), "Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges" (Chicago: Moody Press), explanatory sheet; Leon Wood (1970), *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), p. 114. Long Sojourn advocates must maintain that the 430 years of sojourning according to Exodus 12 and Galatians 3 must be accounted for entirely within Egypt. However, their rationale, as detailed in their scholarly work, fails to persuade.

- ⁵ Kenneth Kitchen (2003), *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 349.
- ⁶ John Rea (1961), "The Time of the Oppression and the Exodus," *Grace Journal*, 2[1]:5-14, Winter.
- ⁷ See John Rea (1960), "The Time of the Oppression and the Exodus," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 3[3]:58-66, Summer.
- ⁸ See B. Hodge (2016), "Long or Short Sojourn by Chronological Derivation Strictly via the Biblical Text," *Biblical Authority Ministries*, July 15, <https://biblicalauthorityministries.wordpress.com/2016/07/15/long-or-short-sojourn-by-chronological-derivation-strictly-via-the-biblical-text/>.
- ⁹ Many critics of the short sojourn approach erroneously assume that all supporters of the short sojourn theory also endorse Rohl's "new chronology" perspective. Rohl suggests that the sojourn began around 1662 B.C. (a date likely incorrect) and connects it to Amenemhat III's reign during Dynasty 12 (a connection also considered to be inaccurate). As a proponent of the short sojourn theory, I want to clarify that I do not endorse Rohl's new chronology or his theology, nor do I see the need to compress Egyptian history to defend our position.

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

March 9	Florence, AL	(256) 757-2456
March 17-20	Henderson, TN	(800) 348-3481

Eric Lyons

March 2	Wetumpka, AL	(334) 567-6561
March 7-9	Homer, AK	(907) 235-7606

Dave Miller

Feb. 28-March 2	Cumming, GA	(770) 887-7353
March 9	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

Jeff Miller

March 7-9	West Plains, MO	(417) 256-6317
March 19-20	Henderson, TN	(800) 348-3481

Why Doesn't God Just...?

Kyle Butt



IN 2023, Alisa Childers and Tim Barnett wrote a book titled *The Deconstruction of Christianity*. In it, they explain that deconstruction is a growing movement in which many young people leave the Christian faith, often for atheism and unbelief. In their discussion about how the deconstruction process begins, they wrote: “Deconstructed beliefs nearly always begin with questions.” Of course, we understand that there is nothing wrong with a good question. In fact, the authors readily recognize that questions are often a great way to get at truth, and that Jesus used questions in His teachings. The authors, however, make a powerful statement concerning questions. They write: “But not all questions are *honest* questions. When it comes to faith, some questions seek answers, and some seek exits. There are questions that seek after truth, but other questions seek to avoid truth.”

One line of questioning that often seems to seek exits instead of answers begins with the statement, “Why doesn’t God just...?” This type of question is often asked by leading atheists as a subtle argument against God’s character. Why doesn’t God just perform miracles for amputees? Why doesn’t God show Himself clearly so more people will believe? Why doesn’t God let everyone into heaven? Why doesn’t God stop bad

people from harming good people? The list could go on and on.

Notice that there can be a subtle implication in questions phrased this way. The subliminal message is often something like this: If God cared about amputees, He would miraculously heal them all. Or, if God really loved people, He would never allow anyone to go to hell and would save all people. Or, God must not care that bad people harm good people, or maybe there is no God at all. We can see that it is often the case that people use the form of a question to attack God’s character or existence, while claiming to innocently be seeking answers to their questions. On the other hand, there are many who ask such questions who are truly seeking answers. Thus, we must all ask ourselves if we are really seeking answers.

In addition, it is important to understand that a question is not an argument against something. For instance, “Why doesn’t God just show Himself?” is not evidence that God does not love people or does not exist. It is simply a question that potentially has an excellent, logical, reasonable answer. Furthermore, when a person says something to the effect of, “I can’t think of a good reason why God doesn’t show Himself more clearly,” that does not mean an answer does not exist. Many people couldn’t think of anything that would sink the Titanic.

Millions of people couldn’t think of any good reason not to use asbestos in factories.

Let us, then, briefly analyze the question: Why doesn’t God show Himself? This has been called the problem of Divine Hiddenness, and there are many materials available on the topic. I’d like to urge you, the reader, to stop right here and try this little exercise. If someone were to agree to pay you one million dollars if you could come up with a logical reason why a loving God might not openly show Himself to every human on the planet, do you think you would take some time to seriously consider the question?

I’m not going to answer the question in this article, but I would like you to consider something. At the beginning of the animated Disney movie “Beauty and the Beast,” a haggard, old woman knocks on the door of the castle where a haughty and spoiled prince lives. The night is stormy, cold, and wet and the poor old woman begs the prince to give her a dry place to stay. The hard-hearted prince callously sends her on her way. He soon learns of his costly mistake when the beggar reveals that she is a beautiful woman who was testing the prince. The prince’s pleas for forgiveness fall on deaf ears, because the woman could see that there was no love in his heart.

Why doesn’t God just show Himself? “There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we did not esteem Him” (Isaiah 53:2-3). Could it be that God is showing Himself to all people, but some just don’t have eyes to recognize Him? [For more information, see Eric Lyons (2016), apologeticspress.org/why-doesnt-god-show-himself/.]



NOTE FROM

The Editor*Truth Hunters: AP's Newest VBS Curriculum*

What sets the Bible apart from the more than 100 million books in the world? Why should a person come to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God? In AP's exciting new *Truth Hunters* Vacation Bible School curriculum, we seek to explore answers to these most important questions.

Truth Hunters is designed to help children understand the evidence that supports the Bible's divine inspiration. The curriculum's five engaging lessons lead children through key categories of evidence, including:

- **Archaeological Accuracy** – Children will learn how physical evidence from archaeology corroborates the historical events, people, and places mentioned in the Bible. They will “dig” into history to uncover powerful evidence that verifies biblical accounts.
- **Predictive Prophecy** – The Bible contains hundreds of accurate predictions about the future, from the fall of cities to the coming of the Messiah. Children will explore the amazing evidence of God's supernatural ability to foretell events long before they happen.
- **Scientific Foreknowledge** – The Bible's accuracy extends to the field of science. Kids will discover how Scripture aligns with scientific facts that were unknown to ancient peoples—proof that the Bible was written by a divine Author.
- **Unity of Scripture** – Despite being written by some 40 different authors over 1,600 years, the



Bible is remarkably consistent in its message. Children will explore the Bible's unity, an essential piece of evidence that it was inspired by God and not merely penned by people.

- **Legacy of the Bible** – No book in history has had the lasting impact of the Bible. From transforming lives to influencing entire cultures, children will learn that the Bible's ongoing legacy is another testimony to its uniqueness.

In addition to the lessons, *Truth Hunters* includes a variety of resources, such as the *Truth Hunters* book, a thrilling adventure story that introduces these lessons in a fun and memorable way (designed for children and families to read prior to VBS). You can also continue the learning well after VBS with the *Truth Hunters* Board Game.

We believe that *Truth Hunters* will not only equip children to understand the inspiration of the Bible but will also empower them to confidently defend it. Let's help our children become *Truth Hunters*—seeking, discovering, and defending the ultimate truth of God's Word!

Eric Lyons

See Center Spread for More Details